

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 SCS-03
PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
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R 281154Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6584
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 12446

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: AO, UK
SUBJECT: ANGOLA: REPORT ON IMPRISONED MERCENARIES

REFERENCE: LONDON 11502

1. FURTHER TO REFTTEL, FCO HAS PASSED TO US FULLER REPORT
FROM HM EMBASSY ROME OF AMBASSADOR VECCHI'S JULY 4
CONSULAR VISIT TO THE IMPRISONED MERCENARIES IN
LUANDA.

2. BEGIN TEXT: VECCHI WAS ALLOWED TO SEE THE
MERCENARIES ON 4 JULY. HE WAS RECEIVED AT THE PRISON
BY 3 OFFICIALS IN UNIFORM WHO ASKED HIM WHETHER HE
WOULD PREFER TO SEE THE PRISONERS TOGETHER OR INDI-
VIDUALLY. HE OPTED TO SEE THEM ONE BY ONE, AND WAS TOLD
HE COULD SPEAK ENGLISH, AND THAT THERE WAS NO LIMITATION
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ON THE CONVERSATION. THE 3 OFFICIALS REMAINED PRESENT
THROUGHOUT, THOUGH THEY NEVER INTERFERED IN THE CONVER-
SATION. VECCHI DID NOT HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE
PRISONERS WERE PREVENTED FROM SAYING THINGS BY THE
PRESENCE OF THE 3 MEN. HE FOUND THEM SLIGHTLY WITH-
DRAWN; CONVERSATION WAS NOT EASY. THE MOST WILLING TO
TALK WERE MARSHALL, EVANS AND FORTUIN.

ALL THE PRISONERS LOOKED IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION AND REASONABLY WELL FED. THEY WERE COMFORTABLY DRESSED IN VARIOUS SHORTS AND SHIRTS, NOT A UNIFORM. THEY SAID THEY SAW A DOCTOR WHENEVER THEY ASKED, AND WERE FULLY SATISFIED WITH THE MEDICAL CARE PROVIDED. UNTIL 27 MAY, THE 7 MEN, TOGETHER WITH 2 AMERICANS (WHOM VECCHI ALSO SAW) HAD BEEN IN ONE VERY LARGE ROOM. THEY HAD 3 MEALS PER DAY, AT 0730, 1200 AND 1730. THEY HAD NOT MUCH TO DO. THEY KEPT THEIR ROOM AND CLOTHES CLEAN AND TRIED WEIGHT-LIFTING WITH PIECES OF FURNITURE. THEY HAD NO READING MATERIAL, INSUFFICIENT WRITING MATERIAL AND NO CIGARETTES. THEY WERE ALLOWED OUT OF THE ROOM TO EXERCISE IN THE COURT YARD IN GROUPS OF 3 TWICE A WEEK ONLY FOR PERIODS OF 15 MINUTES. (ONE MAN SAID THEY HAD HAD A GAME OF FOOTBALL, BUT THE OTHERS DENIED THIS). THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED TO TALK TO THE ANGOLAN PRISONERS. THE GUARDS WERE VERY KIND TO THEM. THERE WAS SOME FRICTION BETWEEN THE PRISONERS DUE TO BEING COOPED UP TOGETHER. NO PARCELS HAD BEEN DELIVERED. THOUGH THEY KNEW FROM LETTERS THAT HAD REACHED THEM THAT ABOUT 50 HAD BEEN SENT. THEY LACKED TOILETRIES, AND FELT MOST OF ALL THE NEED OF SOME ACTIVITY TO KEEP THEM BUSY. IN GENERAL, THEY THOUGHT LIFE PROBABLY WORSE THAN IN A BRITISH PRISON, BUT AS ONE SAID, "UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE CANNOT COMPLAIN." SINCE 2 MAY AND THE ATTEMPTED COUP. DURING WHICH THE PRISONERS HAD HAD THE CONFIDENTIAL

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OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE BUT HAD NOT DONE SO, ABOUT 30 ANGOLANS HAD BEEN PUT IN THE SAME ROOM AS WELL, BUT PARADOXICALLY MORALE HAD RISEN. THE AUTHORITIES SEEMED TO PLACE MORE TRUST IN THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN PRISONERS, WHO WERE NOW EMPLOYED DISTRIBUTING MEALS TO OTHER PRISONERS. ONE OF THE AMERICANS, GRILLO, WAS WORKING PERMANENTLY IN THE KITCHEN. THE PRISONERS SEEMED ALSO TO RECEIVE A PSYCHOLOGICAL LIFT FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGOLANS, WHO PROVIDED NEW PEOPLE TO TALK TO. THEY HAD BEEN TOLD THAT THE OVERCROWDING WOULD NOT BE PERMANENT. END TEXT

BREWSTER

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Sent Date: 28-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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